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The age system of the Nyakyusa has been described in detail in *Good Company*,[1] but, since it forms the basis of their social structure, a brief explanation must here be given for the benefit of readers unacquainted with that earlier volume. Within each chiefdom there are a number of villages composed not of kinsmen but of age-mates. Villages begin when small boys of eight or ten years build together at a little distance from their fathers. They are joined by younger brothers, as these reach the age when boys stop sleeping at home, until the eldest are in their middle teens, when the youngsters will be told to begin another village. The boys of a village have their own leader, a 'natural' leader, not specifically appointed, but they are subject to the headman of their fathers' village, and formerly fought as a group under his direction. But at the 'coming out' a headman for each village is selected from among its members by the fathers: if he dies, his heir—a younger brother or son—inherits his position, so that sometimes a young man becomes headman of an old men's village, taking the name and social position of his father. Only commoners are eligible as headmen: we knew one candidate who was rejected because his great-grandfather was a chief.

Two villages in each chiefdom are senior to the others and their headmen are responsible each for half of the country. During the 'coming out' ritual the chief marries two wives, 'mothers of the country', and one is established in each senior village or capital (*ikitangalala*). The eldest sons of these two wives are the heirs, and later divide the old chief's country between them. Most of the chief's junior wives are divided between the capitals but some may be settled in a colonizing village in unoccupied country. All the chief's sons build with commoners in villages appropriate to their age, and all save the two heirs are subject to the commoner headmen of their villages. They are entitled to some respect as 'sons of the chief', and those of strong personality gain a following and settle disputes between their fellows (as may any commoner), but only the two senior sons can claim political authority.

Before the 'coming out' the villages of young men and their fathers adjoin, for the boys have built on their fathers' land, on the fringes of their fathers' villages. But at the 'coming out' there is a new deal in land. The young men are established in the centre of the country and their fathers move to the periphery; it is not merely that fathers and sons exchange land, but all the boundaries

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, 1952.

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are redrawn and only the fields in old craters (the most prized and fertile of all) are not re-allotted. Thus the villages of kinsmen of two generations adjoin, and often those of three generations.

On the old chief's death his village headmen become priests of the grove in which he is buried, and, in co-operation with his sons, the new chiefs, sacrifice there on behalf of the two countries into which his old chiefdom is divided. There is a nice balance of power between chief and village headmen in life, and when he dies his two heirs and the headmen (or their heirs) continue to share power, the power which belief in his spiritual force and their ability to guide it gives them. The success or failure of rituals is held largely to depend upon the personal relationships of the leading participants, chiefs and commoner priests.

Besides the ordinary commoner priests (the village headmen of a past generation or their heirs) there are priests of the chiefs' lineage, usually belonging to a junior line to which specific ritual functions, such as rain-making, have been entrusted, and whose office is hereditary in the same way as that of a chief. Kasitile (86),[1] the rain-maker, is such a priest: his grandfather was the brother of a ruling chief (43) and had been appointed as rain-maker (*umpelafula*) and priest (*unyago*), the two functions being separate but overlapping. As rain-maker Kasitile tended the rain stones, as priest he initiated the rituals in certain of the sacred groves, though he did not actually officiate himself. Kasitile was a key informant on ritual and a chapter is devoted to his history, since it epitomizes the relationships between chiefs and commoners.

As we have shown, most of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs claim some sort of kinship with one another. Those who are nearly related pray together at the groves of their common ancestors, and those more distantly connected join in sacrifice to their founding fathers, but in the communal rituals kinship is neither the dominant theme nor the exclusive principle of association, as it is in the rituals celebrated by private persons. In the communal rituals most of the priests are commoners unrelated to the dead who are honoured, and the sacrifices are held to benefit not only the descendants of the dead, but all those who live in the countries they once ruled. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the communal rituals constantly recalls that of the rituals of kinship; themes which pervade the death ritual recur again in the rituals of 'coming out' and 'cleansing the country'. This background is

[1] Numerals after a name refer to the genealogy of Nyakyusa chiefs facing p. 3.

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accessible in an earlier book, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*,[1] and the details need not be recapitulated here.

Perhaps the reader has already noted a certain difficulty over tenses: 'is' tends to merge into 'was'. When we first visited BuNyakyusa in 1934 missionaries of various denominations had already been at work, and a foreign government in control, for forty years past. Between 1934 and my last visit in 1955 the changes have been great, but I use the present tense for things seen at first hand, whether earlier or later, and a separate chapter is devoted to the twenty years' change. It is well to recognize at the outset, however, that in 1934 the sanctity and power of the 'divine kings' was already questioned and their rituals were curtailed, and even the pagan cosmology of the Nyakyusa was beginning to exhibit traces of Christian influence. One striking example was the changing, or rather the fluid, connotation of the name *Kyala*.

Two new types of organization developed in BuNyakyusa with the arrival of the Europeans: churches which are based on a principle of association wholly new to the pagan tradition—common belief as opposed to kinship or contiguity; and a centralized system of government. To these have now been added trading concerns, of which the most important are co-operative societies exporting coffee and rice.

The subject of this book is (i) the traditional rituals celebrated on behalf of chiefdoms and groups of chiefdoms, and (ii) the changing ideas and values apparent as a section of the Nyakyusa turn from paganism to Christianity. In the concluding chapters an attempt is made to demonstrate the links between the changes in social structure and the changes in ritual.

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*, 1957.

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area, the Penja, have a grove, Lukata, where they worship their founding ancestor, and the Nyika living on the west bank of the Kiwira river have their grove, Lubaga, twenty miles or more from the Lubaga in Selya and unconnected with it. A third distinct group, the Saku, who were the first inhabitants of the south-eastern part of Rungwe District, have their own grove, Nkeso, where their progenitors Mwamakula and Mwalukinge were buried. None of these has anything like the prestige and sanctity of the Lwembe or the Kyungu, but they are probably the prototype from which the 'divine kings' developed.

What circumstances produced a 'divine king' at Lubaga and not (so far as our limited knowledge goes) at Kabale we do not know, but we can show how the 'divine kingship' at Mbande, near the Lake shore, developed rather differently from the originally similar institution at Lubaga which is forty miles from the Lake. The Kyungu gradually acquired political power in a way in which the Lwembe did not. Among the Nyakyusa the 'sons of Lwembe' spread through the country establishing themselves as independent chiefs. They acknowledged the mystical supremacy of the Lwembe, and sent cattle to him to sacrifice, but they were sovereigns in their own territories. Just what this mystical supremacy of Lwembe implied was and still is often a matter of dispute, as we shall see. On the death of a chief his country was normally divided into two independent sections, each ruled by one of his sons. One heir sometimes fought the other and reduced him to a subordinate position, but the number of independent chiefdoms appears to have increased fairly steadily, and their size did not diminish in proportion, for the Nyakyusa chiefs have been expanding their area of occupation over a long period, establishing themselves as rulers over scattered and unorganized peoples with less developed techniques than their own, or colonizing unoccupied forest country. Expansion into uncultivated forest is still going on (1955), and were it not for the vigilance of the British Administration it is almost certain that the Safwa people would have been conquered and absorbed like the Penja, Lugulu, and others before them.[1] In 1936 over 100 independent chiefdoms were recognized by the people themselves, and they varied in size from 100 to 3,000 adult men.

In Ngonde the development was different. In the early period all the sons of the Kyungu, save two, were killed, and the territorial

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 4.

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rulers were not of the royal blood but 'nobles' (*amakambara*), descendants of the five leading men who had arrived with the Kyungu, of those he found already occupying the country, and of those who arrived after him. Later the slaughter of the Kyungu's sons ceased, and as they grew up they were established as subordinate chiefs through his territories, gradually taking over power from the commoners who had previously ruled, by a process familiar in other parts of Africa.[1] But the 'nobles' retained considerable power. At Lubaga the descendants of the two men who had arrived with the first Lwembe, and of some of those who were there before him, became priests, and priests only; in Ngonde those of similar origin developed secular, as well as ritual, functions.

The reasons why the office of Kyungu developed into a paramount chieftainship, and that of the Lwembe did not, have been examined in a previous publication,[2] and may therefore be dealt with very briefly here. The most important factor was that the Kyungu exported ivory and amassed wealth which was used to bind territorial rulers to him, while the Lwembe remained cut off from the outside world and did not trade at all. The geographical situation largely accounts for this. The ivory of Ngonde first went north, and later south-east, across the Lake, and Mbande was well situated for both routes. It lies eight miles from the Lake and close to a defile which leads from the lake-shore plain to an open table-land stretching north to Lake Tanganyika, the very route which engineers later selected for the Stevenson road. Lubaga, on the other hand, is forty miles from the Lake and the only routes northward lay over broken country and passes 8,000 feet high. Giraud remarks in his journal that the Nyakyusa were the only people he had come across among whom the chiefs did not claim at least one tusk of every elephant killed;[3] they did not claim it, for they had no use for the ivory; but the Kyungu's right to a tusk from every elephant killed was enforced.

The growth of a paramount chieftainship in Ngonde was slow. The early Kyungus lived within an enclosure on Mbande to which only their personal servants and the nobles of Ngonde had

[1] cf. M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 380; H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, pp. 13-14; I. Schapera, in *African Political Systems* (edited Fortes and Evans-Pritchard), pp. 60-1.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3 (1939).

[3] V. Giraud, *Les Lacs d'Afrique Equatoriale* (1890), p. 186.

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643 561 796 [769] [793] Nyakyusa, when sacrifices are continued in the grove of a dead chief such as Mwakisambwe (30), for an indefinite number of generations, and the heirs of his senior village headmen serve as his priests, taking the name of the first holder of the office. Most of the priests of Lubaga held perpetual titles of this sort. The conception of the *corporation sole* is familiar enough in the western tradition, but European observers in Africa are sometimes confused by the use of a personal name and the almost complete identification of each holder with his predecessors, as well as by the practice of treating certain kinship relationships as if they were offices.

561 796 173 634 [611] Generation was determined among the Nyakyusa by association with a chief. There was no name for those who 'came out' together other than that of their chief, who was the focus of the ritual. On the other hand, however, a 'coming out' concerned a whole generation, and it could not be held out of season. If the heir died he was replaced by a brother, as were Mwaipopo I (115) and Mwankuga I (150). If a chief had no male heir of the right age in his senior house his daughter might represent an heir. For example, at the coming out of the sons of Mwaijonga, it was a *girl* Ijonga (114) who performed the leading part in the ritual which fell due before the birth of Mwaipopo I (115). When Mwaipopo I was born and grew up he assumed office, but he died young and was replaced by his younger brother without a further celebration. Because the 'coming out' was thus linked to the maturity of a whole generation we have felt some confidence in assigning approximate dates to the arrival of the heroes. The period between each 'coming out' we estimate at thirty to thirty-five years, though the higher figure is probably more nearly correct. There must in fact have been some flexibility in the timing of the 'coming out' to account for the differences in the number of generations of ruling chiefs in different segments of the lineage. Some of the differences may be due to errors (e.g. it is possible that 70 is an elder brother not the father of 98, and that a generation has been omitted between Mwakapeje (54) and Mwakage (75), but even where there is little possibility of error the number of generations does not always tally.

643 561 622 In theory a man always belongs to the generation succeeding that of his father, irrespective of his age, provided he has not inherited from a man of the previous generation and taken his status, but in practice, since men often have sons of very different